

INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION IN NIGERIA SCHOOLS: A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE

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Abstract

Paradoxically, the apparent euphoria that characterized the expectation of the founding fathers of Social Studies Education in Nigerian Schools appears to be flagging in the face of society characterized by moral decadence and man-made woes. This study was therefore designed to examine the introduction of Social Studies Education in Nigerian schools with a view to determine its success or failure. A research question was raised. A descriptive research design using the survey method was adopted. A 15 item questionnaire with agree and disagree options was designed by the researchers for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 279 Social Studies teachers in Cross River State. Descriptive analysis using frequency and percentages was used for data preparation. The result of the analysis revealed that the introduction of Social Studies Education in Nigerian Schools is a failure with 59.50% of the 279 respondents used for study against 40.50% agreeing on its failure. Hence, it was recommended among others that Social Studies Education should be made to address issues that are today confronting the nation. The issues that are inimical to national development to be addressed include terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalism and among others.

Keywords: Social Studies, Education, Moral decadence, Value, National Development, Success.

Introduction

There is a definite goal for adopting any innovative educational programme and that is- change for the better. The national philosophy of education in Nigeria recognizes the need for social studies Education in building the desired social orientation needed after independence in mobilizing the young citizens for national development. The subject was adopted in Nigeria about 50 years ago as a result of the quest for relevance in the Nigerian education. The traditional subjects like geography, history and civics inherited from the colonial education system according to Mbaba and Omabe (2012) were criticized for not being relevant both in purpose and content to the immediate needs of the Nigerian child and the society at large. The traditional subjects also encouraged learners to know more about the colonial master's country than about their own environment and the pressing problems in their society (Oweredu,1972, Ikem and Reuben 2012). Social Studies in several nations of the world are essentially introduced to meet certain specific needs and aspirations of the people. In Britain for instance, Social Studies was introduced into the school curriculum after the first and second world wars as panacea for social problems (Edinyang and Ubi 2013). The Nigerian society is not an exception to this. This however, partly explains why Social Studies has been given a pride of place at all levels of Nigerian education industry. The corruption free, humane, moral and integrated society which Nigeria is craving for cannot be achieved without a sound foundation as well as instructions in Social Studies. Social Studies as a unique area of discipline is committed to transmitting and forming the values of citizens of this great nation.

Social Studies has come to be accepted as "a school subject that should assist students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society", (Alberta, 2000). National development remains a challenge that preoccupies all nations of the world that aspire for greatness. Social Studies Education touches on all aspects of societal development; be it political, economic, social, cultural, technological or educational.

In Nigerian context, the goals of Social Studies curriculum design is aimed at building a sound and balanced mind as a foundation for functional social education directed towards the development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizen. Integrating and dispensing social knowledge through the instrumentality of Social Studies curriculum design in Nigerian schools is directed towards the following objectives:

- 1) Self-confidence and initiatives;
- 2) Power of imagination and resourcefulness;
- 3) Desire for knowledge and continued learning;
- 4) Sense of compassion for the less fortunate;
- 5) Sense of respect for and tolerance of the opinion of others;
- 6) Social values and attitudes such as: cooperation; participation; interdependence; open-mindedness; honesty; integrity; trustworthiness; diligence and obedience.
- 7) A spirit of national consciousness and patriotism (Garb, Singh, Yusuf and Saad, 2012)

These are considered necessary for sound Social Studies education and functional citizenship education. Towards achieving these basic goals, the subject is design to:

- 1) provides insights into the use of various knowledge structure and procedure from the social sciences that has relevance in modern civilizations;
- 2) be concerned with fostering students better understanding of the movements, events and personalities that have influence the history of their immediate environment and the wider world as a global community;
- 3) foster and improve human relations through a better understanding of others within the immediate environment and beyond .

To do this, the sources of knowledge structure in Social Studies curriculum design is drawn mainly from the social sciences; though, with an orientation that differs from the individual subject disciplines of the social sciences. The role of Social Studies in engineering sustainable national development is really a primordial and was highly appreciated when Obama (2009) asserts that we need the insights and critical thinking skills gained in History and Social Studies to fight poverty and homelessness, crime and discrimination, and to make our nation fairer and freer. Addressing the issues so highlighted, are critical efforts in the quest for National Development, according to the US President.

But whenever this adoption is accompanied by lack of preparation and enthusiasm by people who must make the new programme operative in a given setting, the chances of realizing the benefit of the programme would not only be greatly reduced, but the very existence of the programme itself will eventually be at stake. Regrettably, Okam cited in Mezeobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013), affirms the shortcomings of Social Studies when he states that, "...Social Studies education in Nigerian schools and colleges... has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria or rather is falling in this enterprise" (p.210). This position was re-echoed by Osakwe (2012) that Nigerian Social Studies should begin to focus on restructuring and reconceptualising to make the subject more relevant to current challenges, events and developments.

Some pertinent questions raised by Ikem and Reuben (2012) need to be answered with regards to the journey so far in the introduction of Social Studies education in Nigeria. The response to these questions can determine the true position of Okam's assertion as reported by Mezeobi et al (2013). These questions are:

- a) What has been happening to poverty?
- b) What has been happening to unemployment?
- c) What has been happening to inequality?
- d) What gave rise to high profile corruption in the society?
- e) Why the high rate of insecurity?
- f) Why such intimidating injustice in the society?
- g) Why corrupt public officials are not properly prosecuted?

These questions are the consequences of the present state of development in Nigeria and most developing nations of the world. A nation that is tending towards growth and development must lay emphasis on a reorientation and reorganization of institutions and a transformation of the people's welfare. But an enormous gap continues to exist between intended changes and actual practices in Social Studies Education in Nigeria. Udoukpong, (1998) states that Nigeria lacks a clear direction

for the purpose, method and content of teaching Social Studies that would have addressed many developmental challenges in Nigeria. However, Enoh (2009) blamed education for the slow pace of development in Nigeria. To achieve the expected results, he contends, the school curriculum has to be revisited and restructured to fall in line with the vision of the national development desired.

This by implication means that the goals of Social Studies curriculum is yet to be achieved, hence, broad goal and objectives are left unachieved even after about five decades of its full scale introduction in the Nigerian educational industry. This is signaled by a society characterized by moral decadence, religious intolerance, man-made woes, corruption, tribal crises and terrorism such as that of Boko Haram. Also, in the list of these woes are the chain of bomb blasts, lootocracy and provocative statements among the ruling class, which Social Studies was supposed to have addressed.

One of the other reasons for the adoption of Social Studies as set forth by the Mombasa Conference in 1968, was that the new subject is supposed to enable every school-going child in Africa to understand peoples' interaction with their cultural, social and physical environment, appreciate home and heritage, develop skills and attitudes expected of citizens and learn to express ideas in many ways (Meryfied and Mutebi, 1991). As useful as the subject is to the moral and intellectual development of the child as well as the acquisition of necessary skills for building the nation, there has been a gap in the Nigeria Social Studies curriculum. The subject is offered in the primary and junior secondary schools in the country but not offered at the senior secondary school level, making it difficult for proper shift from the secondary to the tertiary level of education.

It is obvious that the new Social Studies curriculum at the senior secondary school is suffering from lack of implementation. Though the curriculum is new, the problem of resistance to change must be solved. Though teachers who will implement the new curriculum are favourably disposed to the curriculum, there should be a change of attitude particularly from the government, school administrators and examination bodies (Jekayinfa 2005). In the absence of the necessary political, administrative and professional goodwill and commitment for the new Social Studies curriculum at the senior secondary school level in Nigeria, it would be very difficult to implement the new curriculum.

However, no authority can completely bemoan the complete failure of Social Studies Education in Nigeria. Social Studies Education has been identified by scholar such as Edinyang and Ubi (2013) as a potent instrument that has facilitated the attainment of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens that are contributing maximally to the growth of the society. This can be seen from the citizens' behavioral dispositions which may include honesty, dedication, forthrightness, hard work, and productivity. The Nigeria-centric characteristics of Social Studies is to emphasize the social relevance of Social Studies in which case it addresses the social needs, social realities and social aspiration of Nigerians (Mezeobi et al 2013).

Research question

What is the extent of the success and failure of social studies education in Nigerian Schools?

Methodology

This was a descriptive research which employed the survey method to find out the degree of success or failure of the introduction of social studies in Nigerian schools. The study made use of a sample of 279 teachers teaching Social Studies in 253 secondary schools in Cross River State of Nigeria (Department Of Planning, Research and Statistics 2014).

A two sections questionnaire was designed to elicit information from the respondents. The section A of the questionnaire requested for personal information of the respondents on the variables of gender, school location and educational zone. The section B of the questionnaire with a 15 items statement was designed to find out teachers view of the status of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. The instrument was content and face validated by experts in Test and Measurement in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Faculty of Education University of Calabar, Nigeria with reliability co-efficient of 0.74 using test- retest method.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each of the statements in the questionnaire on success and failure of the introduction of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. There were both positive and negative statements. If a teacher agreed to any positive statement, he/she was adjudged to have accepted the success of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. Similarly, if a teacher disagreed with a negative statement, he/she was adjudged to have accepted the success of Social Studies in Nigerian schools.

On the other hand, if a teacher agreed with a negative statement, or if he/she disagreed with a positive statement, he/she was adjudged to have accepted the failure of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. Frequency counts of all agreements to positive statements and all disagreements to negative statements were summed up for a respondent and the percentage was worked out. If the respondents scored 50% or above on these; he/she was adjudged to had agreed on the success of social studies in Nigerian schools.

On the other hand, frequency counts of all disagreements to positive statements and agreements to negative statements were summed up for a respondent and percentage was worked out. If the respondent scored 50% or above on these, he/she was adjudged to had agreed on the failure of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. Then decision is made based on the percentage that falls under failure and success.

Data presentation and Results

Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyzed the data collected to answer the research question.

Table 1: Frequency counts and percentages table showing teachers' position on the degree of success and failure of the introduction of Social Studies in Nigerian schools.

Category of Teachers	Failure (N50% and above)	Success (N50% and above)	Total
Male	97(60.25)	64(39.75)	161(57.71%)
Female	69(58.47)	49(41.53)	118(42.29%)
Total	166(59.50)	113(40.50)	279(100%)
Urban	101(68.71)	46(31.29)	147(52.69%)
Rural	65(49.24)	67(50.76)	132(47.31%)
Total	166(59.50)	113(40.50)	279(100%)
Ogoja	46(59.74)	31(40.26)	77(27.60%)
Ikom	59(52.21)	54(47.79)	113(40.50%)
Calabar	61(68.54)	28(31.46)	89(31.90%)
Total	166(59.50)	113(40.50)	279(100%)

The analyses of data on Table 1 showed that more teachers have agreed on the failure of the introduction of Social Studies than those who agreed on its success. 166 respondents representing 59.50% of the sample of 279 teachers used for study against 113(40.50) agreed on failure and success respectively in the introduction of Social Studies in Nigerian schools. Also, 97 (60.25%) male teachers as against 64 (39.75%) agreed on the failure of the curriculum while 69 (58.47%) female teachers also supported failure as against 49 (41.53%) female teachers that agreed on the success of the introduction of Social Studies education in Nigerian schools.

Many teachers of the urban schools 101(68.71%) were in support of the failure of social studies in Nigerian schools as against 46(31.29%) who agreed on its success in the research area. However, the reverse was the case with their counterparts in rural schools that revealed the results of 65(49.24%) and 67(50.76%) in support of failure and success respectively. Perhaps, exposure of urban students to uncensored media reports and entertainment is responsible for these indexes of failure of Social Studies in Nigerian schools while students in the rural setting only live by their parents and teachers values.

The analysis of the data based on education zone also indicate that more teachers agreed on failure than success of the introduction of social studies education in Nigerian schools, pointing at 46(59.74) against 31(40.26%), 59(52.21%) against 54(47.79%) and 61(68.54%) against 28(31.46%) for Ogoja, Ikom and Calabar zones in that order.

Discussion

The result of this study revealed by analysis of data using frequency and percentages indicate that Social Studies as education had not really achieve its goal(s) in Nigerian schools. This is because greater percentage (59.50%) of the sample (279) used for the study agreed on its failure than its success. This result is in line with Okam cited in Mezeobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013), who affirms the shortcomings of Social Studies when he states that, "...Social Studies education in Nigerian schools and colleges... has failed in its educational mission in Nigeria or rather is falling in this enterprise" (p.210). Also in support of this result, Okam's position was re-echoed by Osakwe (2012) that Nigerian Social Studies should begin to focus on restructuring and reconceptualising to make the subject more relevant to current challenges, events and developments.

Further in accordance with the finding of this study, is the position of Udoukpong, (1998) who states that Nigeria lacks a clear direction for the purpose, method and content of teaching Social Studies that would have addressed many developmental challenges in Nigeria. Similarly, Enoh (2009) blames education for the slow pace of development in Nigeria. To achieve the expected results, he contends, the school curriculum has to be revisited and restructured to fall in line with the vision of the national development desire that education should aim at the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social Studies education in Nigerian school system has fallen short of its intended mission by the founding fathers, even after five decades of its full scale implementation in the shore of Nigeria. It is sad to observe that the relatively new social studies curriculum at the senior secondary school is suffering from lack of implementation. This lose of essence is signaled by Nigerian society characterized by moral decadence, religious intolerance, man-made woes, corruption, lootocracy tribal crises and terrorism. In order to meet the desires and intentions of the founding father of Social Studies in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made.

- i) Social Studies contents should be designed to include work ethics, dedication, honesty, national ideals and values, democratic principles, skills for data collection and analysis, decision-making process and problems solving.
- (ii) Students should be taught to show commitments, demonstrate knowledge and skills and how to participate in national economic and democratic activities.
- (iii) Social Studies Education should be made to address issues that are today confronting the nation. The issues that are inimical to national development to be addressed include terrorism, armed robbery, hostage taking, suicide bombing, pipeline vandalism, corruption, tribalism and Boko Haramism.
- (iv) There should be a deliberate effort to strengthening the pedagogical approaches for Social Studies teaching with a view to actualizing the quest for national development. Social Studies teaching method should focus on thought-provoking and investigation-oriented approach. It should be integrative and dynamic to enhance a transformative discipline that will chart a course for national development.

v) As a matter of necessity and urgency, Social studies should be allowed a full scale implementation in senior secondary schools in Nigeria and not as haphazardly done in some states of the federation today.

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